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EDITORIAL NOTES

The last great debate of national import in which the foes of manual training made their final stand was in the meeting of superintendents held in Washington, D. C., in March, 1889. The subject formed one of the chief topics on the program, and the result seemed to be so indecisive that one of the principal opponents, who at that time was an influential man in education, said: "Well, didn't we do them up?" But its right to a place in the course of study has never been really seriously questioned in an equally important body since! "How beggarly appear arguments in the face of a defiant deed." It is the "defiant deed" alone that shapes the things that are to come to pass, even after they have been disproved by the logician and howled down by the mob. It was much later than the Washington debate—almost a decade—when Colonel Parker went down to a public meeting in Chicago which packed the council chamber, and met a smart lawyer, then a member of the Board of Education, to discuss the fads, of which clay-modeling was the chiefest sinner. It was the old struggle over again of the seer with the "practical man": Each was as inexplicable to the other as though they spoke strange tongues. For, the one was estimating values in terms of human character, and the other was appraising clay at two cents a pound.

Since those days manual work, in a great variety of forms which then were scarcely heard of, has come into the schools, and it has done much to make the term "fad" respectable. The annual meeting of the Western Drawing and Manual Training Teachers' Association enables one through its exhibits to keep step with the progress of this work from year to year. To one familiar with the character of the meetings of this body a decade ago, the recent sessions held at the University of Chicago show a marvelous development in both quantity and quality. Whereas

the exhibits were once small and made up, chiefly, of comparatively few drawings in black and white and in colored crayons, with here and there a few water-colors, the whole being liberally interspersed with copies, now one is confronted with a bewildering amount of material illustrating a half-dozen or more interesting kinds of artistic hand-work, in addition to the much-improved products of brush and pencil. The present exhibits of the society show in graphic terms the rapid and radical changes taking place in the schools.

A few years ago the present industrial and artistic output of school children would have been deemed impossible. The children have demonstrated as never before their ability to conceive and carry out a large amount of work having intrinsic merit. It remains only to organize further these efforts toward more useful and more definite ends. The teachers, the pupils, and the parents must bestir themselves to find what needs there are in the school, in the home, or in the community at large which the schools can fill. A genuine purpose, that can be easily appreciated and clearly understood by the children, must lie behind every piece of work that is done. It is doing things with a distinct realization of the needs that leads to the highest quality in the educational result. If this point is not clearly wrought out as the fundamental principle in organization, the art and handwork will be confined forever to the low level of the "pretty" and the "cunning."

The introduction of the study of design is an important step in the direction of proper organization. This subject fastens the attention of the pupils upon the relation of form to function; and as the adaptation becomes more and more refined, the merit of the result continues to rise. The work in design will be more useful as it becomes freer from the tendency to copy its forms from other days—an inclination not at all unnatural. The art of a people is their most enduring monument, and it is the embodiment of their ideals. These two facts will always cause it to command a respectful

**Ability of
Children to
Work**

**Study of
Design**

attitude of mind in those who study its significance, from which it is but a short step to actual imitation.

Of course, there are certain axioms in design, relating to arrangement and proportion, which always hold, and which always have controlled really artistic work; but the need now is that these principles be applied to the development of themes that belong to the present; to the embodiment of higher ideals than ever before—not of art alone, but of life as a whole. It must be remembered that ideals have not only changed; they have grown and are still growing. The proper development of design, therefore, requires that the children shall draw directly upon nature—not from other art—for their forms and materials. Otherwise they cannot remain original; they cannot become productive; they must degenerate into copyists.

The thing most needed at this time for the furtherance of art is that there shall be a better understanding between the artist and the scientist. No artist ever plays an important rôle in his age until he goes to his work thoroughly saturated with the highest ideals of the time.

The Artist vs. The Scientist

Most of the art teachers today who are in contact with the children are not only almost wholly deficient in technical science training, but they have not studied nature enough to enable them to see even in dim outline the tremendous import of the theory of evolution. They have not yet caught the distinction between the older idea of a static creation and the newer idea of a dynamic creation. They face nature and really interpret it as the artists did in the days when the race was under different intellectual and moral control; and hence they see no special incongruity in allowing the children to repeat the art forms which are not significant now because they represent radically different conceptions of nature. Post-Darwinian art, whether better or worse, at least will never repeat the art of the Orient. In some way and in some form, neither of which at present may be clearly understood, it must involve the notion of movement; it must embody the idea of a continually rising goal, of a growing ideal in human life.

The oriental is controlled by his idea of a static creation. He sought and attained a dead level. He found a pattern and repeated it for centuries, until even its origin was lost and its significance had disappeared. Beautiful as the art forms are, as much as they tell of simplicity, skill, and patience, they are valuable to us as warnings rather than as models. The excellences of oriental art correspond to the perfections of a dead level; they represent a fixed horizon of thought, above which almost nothing new arose in centuries. This was necessarily true because the notions of nature and of its relation to man remained throughout this long lapse of time practically unchanged.

In the higher sense, therefore, the older art is not true to nature as we now know it, though it is true to nature as the latter was then understood. By being "true to nature" I do not mean that there shall be that microscopic faithfulness that limits every line of art to the actual nerve filaments of the individual thing. Nor does truthfulness to nature call for that rigid adjustment of "facts" which made Thomas Gradgrind object to flowers in the carpets because in nature we do not walk upon flowers. It does mean, however, that the unity which the new science seems to find in nature shall be made to appear in those forms of art which choose to use its materials. The scientific mind now sees in every bit of landscape, and in every clump of bushes, an immense variety in form and color, but withal an interrelationship among all the parts that makes a complete unity. The single, isolated leaf is meaningless, but in its place on the bush it is essential in explaining the meaning of the whole.

Art "True to Nature"

Unity of Nature in Art

If, now, in some piece of art which essays to use such materials, this unity is not preserved either in fact or by clear suggestion, then there is a fatal infidelity to nature as the man of science sees it. There is no just cause for quarrel between the artist and the scientist at any other point. This is a fact which the greatest nature artists have always recognized.

On the other hand, we are educated beyond the point of being satisfied with the fragmentary and unrelated representations of nature, no matter in what field of art they may be found. This growth, which is not less scientific than it is artistic, is gradually relegating to oblivion the older wall-papers of maniacal pattern. Indeed, unless some invention soon comes to the rescue, wall-paper as a means of mural decoration is doomed. We are coming to see how preposterous it is to plaster over the four walls of a room a repetition of the same pattern. In a room with windows in one wall, a fireplace in another, a doorway in a third, and a blank space on the fourth, there is no possibility of treating the room well as a whole if the walls are all to be covered with the same set figures. It is out of the question to suppose that these, having the same light and space values, can be adapted equally well to all sides. The two determining factors in such a case are light and space. The intensity of the light will decide where the decoration focus, so to speak, will be, and the distribution of the light will regulate the depth and variety of color and shade that can be used. The shape and size of the various spaces will determine the forms that may be employed, and the artist who is also versed in nature will not plan to use unrelated figures and groups whose unity will be marred or destroyed by the nature of the spaces in which they are placed.

The study of design, therefore, which will be sufficiently broad to organize the art work in schools in its present condition must comprehend a good deal more than the problem of merely filling spaces with well-balanced forms; it is of equal importance that the artist and teacher should be so thoroughly saturated with the modern scientific views of nature that, in perfecting his design, he will show, on the one hand, as much conscience in the selection and treatment of natural forms as, on the other hand, he displays judgment in filling spaces. Design requires not only training of the sense of proportion; it also involves scientific insight into the facts of nature.

**Decadence of
Wall-Paper Art**

**Double Problem
of Design**

It is at this point that the recent exhibit showed its greatest weakness. The work in design will always present an anæmic condition, until it is associated with an exuberant study of nature; it will starve to death though in the midst of a great plenty. The exhibit, as a whole, indicates that the work of the schools is weakest upon this side. The advance made in the study of nature is not abreast of the improvement in the technics of expression. It is still irregular and scrappy, giving small evidence that the pupils have any grasp of the underlying thought of development. It is inevitable, therefore, that this weakness should appear in the art work.

The remedy lies in a broader, a more persistent, and a more intelligent study of nature. The teachers of both art and nature-study must get not only the modern point of view that science offers; they must make a closer personal study of the methods of development that are found in nature. They must through personal observation and study derive the dynamic conception and apply it in their teaching, instead of the static conception which is now, practically, in control. The pupils must have still freer access to the larger aspects of nature, and they must be allowed to represent directly what they see. The beautiful landscape work which children can do, and which may tell so much of the movement in nature, had practically no place in the exhibit. The tendency is still too strong to have the pupils learn to draw first and then learn to see afterward. This is especially true of the landscape sketching, which is so essential in nature-study.

There is no reason, however, for impatience or discouragement. The future seems assured of great things from biological considerations alone. In a recent magazine article Mr. Burbank points out the probable significance of the fact that we have in this country the mingling of all the races on the globe. In the year 1904 there were over 750,000 emigrants, representing over fifty nationalities. What the virility of this great composite may mean in future achieve-

**Better Study of
Nature Needed**

**Promise of
American Art**

ment one can but dimly forecast. Under the stimulus of a matchless environment, that includes almost every influence to which a human being can respond, it would seem that the embellishments of art and the inventions and discoveries in industry must indefinitely move forward and upward. To take a practical part in this growing individual and material life is the teacher's inspiring work.

W. S. J.